

COUNTER TERRORISM

THE THREAT OVERVIEW

The UK threat level from International Terrorism is SEVERE. This means an attack is highly likely. The current GB Mainland threat level from Northern Ireland Related Terrorism (NIRT) is SUBSTANTIAL, indicating that an attack is a strong possibility. The threat level for NIRT was increased in May 2016. Dissident Republicans have a long held aspiration to attack Great Britain, however Northern Ireland remains the primary focus⁶. It is assessed that Islamist extremist terrorism poses the main threat to mainland UK. Terrorist groups in Syria, Iraq and other nations, including Al Qaida and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), possess both the intention and the capability to direct attacks against the West. The UK is recognised as a high-priority target for Islamist extremists.



The majority of UK-based terrorist attack plots have been planned by British residents. MI5 indicate there are several thousand individuals in the UK who support violent extremism or are engaged in Islamist extremist activity⁷. There is a continuing threat posed by the return of British nationals who have engaged in fighting for extremist groups overseas. Motivated persons who have acquired skills whilst overseas may organise attacks under direction from foreign-based orchestrators, under their own initiative, or radicalise others to conduct attacks. It is accepted that the majority of returnees are not motivated to conduct attacks in the UK,

however, the volume of returnees implies that there is the potential for some to attempt to conduct such activity.

The dissemination of online material from terrorist groups remains highly prevalent, with ISIL and Al Qaida being the main authors of distributed media content. This extremist rhetoric plays a key role in what motivates many spontaneous volatile extremists (SVEs) and lone-actors to conduct no-notice attacks. The mass-transit rail environment provides a plausible target location for instigation of such attacks.

The rail network offers a target rich environment for terror-related activity; high foot-fall and heavy utilisation of the network creates crowded places. Coupled with the relatively low levels of security which can be practically emplaced, the mass transit rail environment is an attractive target for terrorists. The terrorism threat similarly applies to Police and other uniformed staff, as well as to members of the public.

COUNTERING TERRORISM (*ADRIAN DWYER, FORCE CT RISK ADVISER*)

To deal effectively and proportionately with the uncertainty of interpreting terrorist intentions, BTP considers three interrelated variables within its strategic assessment of risk:

- The inherent vulnerability of open, mass transit rail operations
- The plausibility that such vulnerability may be exploited

⁶ JOSEP/214/16 Threat to the UK and UK Interests Overseas

⁷ <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/international-terrorism>